

ST. PAUL'S ADIEU to the
ELDERS of EPHESUS.

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PLAIN and PRACTICAL

SERMON,
PUBLISH'D

By EDWARD COMBE, A.M. Rector of
St. Martin's in the City of WORCESTER.

With a short PREFACE to the INHABITANTS
of that PARISH.

*Omne, quod in re bona dilucide
Dicitur, præclare dici videtur.*

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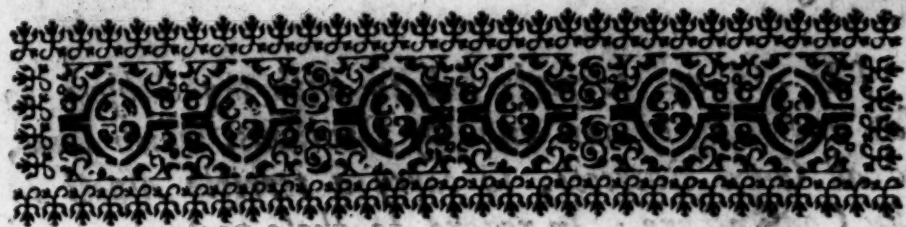
SE. PAUL'S ADIEU to the
ELDERS of EPHESUS.

A
PLAIN and PRACTICAL
SERMON.

Given in the Court of the
Commons, in the City of London.



W. O. S. E. W. S.
Book No. 1117.



T O

My very good FRIENDS,
 Inhabitants of the Parish of
 St. *MARTIN*, Part lying
 in the CITY of *WOR-*
CESTER, and Part lying
 in the COUNTY of *WOR-*
CESTER.



S the last Advice of an expiring Pa-
 rent is taken to be Sacred: As the last
 and solemn Words of a departing
 Friend make deep Impression; I hope,
 you will kindly receive, attentively per-
 use, and long retain the Tenour, at least, of this ve-
 ry plain and practical Discourse, design'd for general
 Use, and adapted to the meanest Capacity. I am

not insensible, at the same Time, that the English Presses are a little too prolifick of Performances of this Kind.

IT did not properly fall in with my Subject to say any thing of our unhappy Divisions, which seem, to all Good Patriots, to carry a terrible Aspect in this Conjunction: In regard to these portentous and unnatural Divisions at Home, from which so much is expected by our Enemies Abroad, I think my self in Duty bound to speak to ye here in one Word; but a Word of Veracity, and Conscience not perfunctorily inform'd, Viz.

THOSE that are invested with Sovereign Powers, by Election, Inheritance, by Ballot, or otherwise, in any State or Country, if in any tolerable Degree they answer the End of their Commission, are the Ministers of God. Government is His Ordinance; that is to say, His adorable Providence has made it absolutely necessary for the Conservation and Welfare of Societies: But after all, 'tis a meer human Creature as to its Form, and varies throughout the whole World. Here, with us, in our Constitution, 'tis undoubtedly in the Power of a King or Queen, in Conjunction with the Estates of the Realm assembled in Parliament, to limit the Succession of the Crown, especially in such Exigencies as we were under, when our Religion, (I mean the Church of England) our Laws, our sacred and immutable Laws, Liberty, Property, our All was at Stake: And it is an apparent Absurdity and Contradiction, if we consider rightly the Comprehension and natural Extent of that Power, to say otherwise. He therefore
that

hat shall advisedly, or unadvisedly, to satisfy his
 sinister Views, Prepossessions, conceited or unjust Re-
 sentments, attempt to subvert our present legal and
 happy Settlement, attempts to render himself guilty,
 if he be not actually so already, of all the Confusions
 and Calamities that the violent Dissolution of a
 Government can infer, too great and too numerous
 to be conceiv'd, and too horrible to be express'd.

A Conscientious Person, who bears a Sense of
 Religion and its Power in his Heart, submits to the
 good Providence of God, altho' he be under some
 Scruples as to Revolutions and Titles; he knows that
 Protection and Obedience are reciprocal Duties; he
 thanks God for the Quiet he enjoys, altho' some Dust
 may stick in his Eyes, thrown by disappointed and
 malignant, equivocating, mercenary Casuists, Sophi-
 sters, and Scribblers; he does not countenance, so
 much as by a Smile, those little Emissaries, and un-
 derling Incendiaries, that despise Dominions, and
 speak Evil of Dignities, those that St. Jude calls
 Clouds without Water, that is, poor empty Phan-
 toms, who make it their whole Merit, and almost all
 their Business, to calumniate the King's most Ex-
 cellent Majesty, and to arraign His righteous Admi-
 nistration.

BUT then, Good God! How execrable must the
 Treason and Perjury of those Miscreants be, how
 flagrant their Crime, who take solemn Oaths to de-
 fend the King against all His Enemies to Day, with
 a premeditated Intention to take up Arms, and re-
 bel against Him to Morrow? A Prince that has, to
 qualify him for His High Station, all the Royal Ver-

tues

ties that can be desir'd by good Subjects, or fear'd by bad Ones. Vertues He has exercis'd in the most advantagious and signal Instances ever since His Accession to the Throne; the bare History or Recital of which would prove a Panegyrick; but His greatest Praise is God's visible Protection.

THIS is what I had to offer to candid and unprejudic'd Consideration; and what, I hope, you will take in good Part from him who heartily prays for your Peace and Prosperity, in this Life and in the World to come,

Your Unworthy Pastor,

But

Most Sincere Friend,

And

Affectionate Servant,

E. COMBE



ACTS XXV. 32.

And now, Brethren, I commend ye to God, and to the Word of his Grace, which is able to build ye up, and to give ye an Inheritance among all them which are Sanctify'd.



EXCEPT the Lord build the House, they labour in vain that build it, says Holy David.

Ps. cxxvii. 9.

Were these divine Words of the Royal Prophet deeply imprinted in our Souls, the Truth they contain would carry us incessantly to implore the Assistance of God, without which we can do nothing, and with which we should succeed better in all our Undertakings. Men generally place too much Confidence in the outward Means, to which they have recourse to accomplish their Designs. Experience shews us this daily, by the ill Success of the most able Politicians in the Government of States, of the most excellent and laborious Merchants in their respective Negotiations, of the

the most vigilant and careful Parents in the Education of their Children: But the Example we shall now insist upon, is that of Preachers. Of whom, a great Part, to create in Men the Love of Truth, imagine it is sufficient to shew them the Beauty and Excellence of Vertue, and represent the Deformity and dismal Consequences of Vice: They think their eloquent and lively Discourses; their Exhortations and Remonstrances, supported by decent Action and Gesture, with a strong and harmonious Voice, are enough to make them Masters of Men's Hearts. But sad Experience shews how much they are mistaken in their Aim: The very best Sermons are fruitless and ineffectual. This, we own, may be ascrib'd to the Corruption and ill Disposition of the Hearer's Hearts, who do not come to Church but by Custom, Curiosity, and Decency, with little or no Intention to be instructed and sanctify'd. But Religion informs us, that the small Success of the Preaching of the Gospel is to be charg'd, likewise, upon those, who, being employ'd in this *Ministry*, too frequently omit one of the principal Parts of their Duty; namely, the insisting sufficiently upon the Necessity of Divine Grace. St. Paul, whom we may call the Master and Model of Preachers, teaches them in our Text what they are to do to render their Hearer's holy and happy. After he had instructed, exhorted, comforted and encourag'd the Christians of *Ephesus*, in the Person of their Conductors; he says to them in our Text, *And now, Brethren, I commend ye to God, and to the Word of his Grace, which is able to build ye up, and to give ye an Inheritance among all them which are sanctify'd.*

The Discourse, of which this Text is a Part, is one of the most touching and pathetick Discourses that is to be found in the Holy Scripture. The Sacred Historian tells us, that St. Paul, after he had labour'd in the Gospel for many Years in *Asia* and *Greece*, was directed by the Spirit to return to *Jerusalem*; that
upon

upon his Arrival at *Miletus*, he sent for the Elders of the Church of *Ephesus*; that he reminded them of the holy Instructions he had given them, *Ye know*, says he to them, *that I have kept back* Acts xx. 20. *nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shew'd ye, and have taught ye publickly, and from House to House. Wherefore I take ye to record this Day, that I am pure from the Blood of all Men; for I have not* Ib. 26. 27. *shun'd to declare unto ye all the Counsel of God.* After this, he discovers to them the great Danger they would soon be expos'd to by Seducers, which he calls *grievous Wolves*, who would *speak perverse Things*, to draw Disciples after them. For that Reason V. 29. 30. he exhorts them to take care of themselves, and the Flock that God had committed to their Charge. Therefore, says he, *watch, and remember that by the Space of three Years I ceased not to warn* V. 31. *every one Night and Day with Tears.* After he had fill'd them with this religious Fear, he comforts them; he endeavours to inspire them with a holy Confidence, by assuring them of the Assistance of God, that would never forsake them. *And now, Brethren, I commend you to God, and to the Word of his Grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an Inheritance among all them which are sanctify'd.*

BUT for your better Comprehension of all the Advantages that are contain'd in this Prayer that we now make to God for ye, I purpose to do two Things in this Discourse.

First, I will consider the Meaning and Intent of these Words, *I commend ye to God, and to the Word of his Grace.*

IN the Second Place, I will examine the Reasons and Ground of this Prayer, *which is able to build ye up, and to give you an Inheritance among all them that are sanctify'd.*

And now, Brethren, I commend you to God. This Expression is very much us'd in the New Testament. When our Lord Jesus Christ was upon the Cross, and

ready to expire, he commended his Soul into the Hands of his Father: That is to say, without doubt, that he pray'd him to preserve his Soul to the glorious Day of his Resurrection. So in the xivth Chapter of the *Acts* we see that St. Paul and Barnabas are commended to God by the Church of Antioch: That is to say, as St. Luke explains it, that the Church made extraordinary Prayers for them, when the holy Spirit had nominated them to go, and preach the Gospel in divers Parts of the World. Thus in our Text, when St. Paul says to the Elders, and in their Person to the Believers of Ephesus, *I commend ye to God*, it is as much as if he had said to them, *I bend my Knees before the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; may it please God to protect and defend ye always, against all your Enemies both Spiritual and Temporal; may God confirm ye in his Covenant, and finally conduct ye to eternal Life.* We cannot better explain this general Prayer, *I commend ye to God*, than by the particular Prayers we find so frequent in St. Paul's Epistles.

BUT how would the Apostle be understood, when he says, *I commend you to God, and to the Word of his Grace?* The Word of his Grace: Is not that the Gospel? And how can St. Paul commend us to the Gospel, as if it were a Person able to Guard, Defend and take Care of us? On the contrary, the Evangelical Doctrine is commended to us, it is intrusted to us, as a Treasure that we are to keep faithfully to our last Breath. To remove this Difficulty, we must understand that it is the ordinary Style of the Scripture to represent Light, Truth, Charity, and the Word of God as Persons, and to attribute to them the Qualities, and Actions of Intelligent and Rational Beings. To be convinced of this you need but look into the Psalms of David; *Psal. xliii. 3. Send out thy Light and thy Truth, says that holy Man, that they may bring me; and in another Place, Thy Testimonies are my Counsellors.*

Secondly,

Secondly, You are to observe, that the Word, or the Doctrine of the Gospel is the ordinary Means that God makes use of to convert and save Men. The Gospel is the *incorruptible Seed of Regeneration, which liveth and abideth for ever.* Forasmuch then as Things are wonderfully preserved and sustained by the very same Means that gave them their Being; it is not without great Reason that St. Paul says to the Believers of *Ephesus*, I commend ye to God, and to the Word of his Grace. I fear nothing, the holy Apostle would say, provided the Gospel be always faithfully preached unto ye, provided *the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all Wisdom.* It is by the Preaching of the Gospel of the Grace of God, that ye have been converted from Idols. It is by the same Means that *you are delivered from the Power of Darkness, into his marvellous Light.* I pray then the living and true God, that he would confirm ye in this holy State, by the Word of his Grace; by the Preaching of the same Gospel; I supplicate him so to Act by his Providence without, and by the Power of his Spirit within, that this Word may produce in you all the Effects to which it is appointed; that all the Examples, all the Motives that it proposes, may make the deepest Impression in your Hearts, and fill ye with Knowledge and Zeal for the Glory of God, with Love for Piety, with Charity for your Neighbour, and with spiritual Prudence, that it may effectually comfort you in your Afflictions, that it may be your Guide and your Light in the Wilderness of this World, till it introduces you into heavenly *Canaan*, the Mansions of Felicity and Glory; for indeed it is the Word of the Gospel only that can save your Souls.

IN short, the Gospel is called the *Word of the Grace of God*, because it fully reveals to us that Grace, and that infinite Mercy, that God has discover'd towards Mankind in the New-Covenant; Grace that inclin'd

him to send his Son into the World to redeem us by his most precious Blood ; Grace that calls us into Communion with him , while we deserve the most terrible Effects of his Vengeance ; Grace which forgives our Sins ; Grace which regenerates and imparts supernatural Assistance to sanctify us for the future ; Grace which promiseth us Salvation and eternal Life. It is to this Grace of God that St. Paul here recommends the Believers, *I commend ye to God, and to the Word of his Grace.*

THIS Petition thus explain'd, manifestly supposes these two important Truths ; *First*, That we all stand in need of the continual Assistance of the Grace of God in the Work of our Salvation ; and that without it, all the Preaching, all the Advertisements, all the Remonstrances, in a Word, all the Care and Vigilance of Pastors must be absolutely vain and insignificant.

THE *Second* Truth which this Petition of the Apostle supposes, is That to operate our Salvation, God does not act upon our Souls by Inspirations, by extraordinary Illuminations, by Visions, by prophetic Revelations ; he always makes use of the Ministry of his Word, of Reasons, and Motives that the Gospel contains, and which are proper to produce Faith in our Hearts, and lead us to Repentance. This Good God renders us attentive to the holy Truths which his Word teacheth us, and opens our Hearts that we may receive them with the Obedience of Faith.

I shall not stay to prove this Doctrine at large, and to refute the pernicious Error of *Fanaticks*, properly so call'd, who speak of the Word of God as a dead Letter, and of no Effect, upon a Pretence that Believers are under the perpetual and immediate Conduct of the holy Spirit. This Error is so gross, that the least Knowledge of Religion is enough to restrain us from giving into it.

BUT there is a much more dangerous Error against which we ought to guard our selves very carefully : 'Tis that

that which denies the Necessity of Grace, and supernatural Assistance to do well, or to persevere in Virtue. The Spirit of Man is naturally full of Pride; is jealous of its Liberty and Independance; and cannot bear this humbling Doctrine, which supposes that we are indebted to God for all the good Motions that we have, for all the Victories that we gain over our sinful Passions and Inclinations; in a Word, for all the Progress we make in Piety. We are oblig'd then to insist upon this Subject, and strenuously to establish this *Capital Truth* of Christianity.

I prove it first of all by express Passages of Holy Scripture. St. Paul, to reform the Dissentions and scandalous Partialities that were in the Church of *Corinth*, in respect to the Apostles and Evangelists that had preach'd the Word of God to them, says, *Who is Paul, and who is Apollos, but Ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every Man? I have planted, and Apollos watered; but God gave the Increase. So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the Increase.* To which he adds these excellent Words, *Ye are God's Husbandry; ye are God's Building.* Could St. Paul assert more clearly, that the Ministers of the Gospel are but Instruments in the Hand of the Lord, and that all their Labours will be useless without his constant Assistance, without a particular Blessing from Above? It would be very easy to collect a Multitude of Passages in Scripture, which establish this Truth. But to be short, I pass to another Proof of it, taken from the Prayers of all the Saints, both of the Old and the New Testament: They all unanimously say, *For sake me not, O Lord. Set a Watch, O Lord, before my Mouth; keep the Door of my Lips. Incline not my Heart to any evil Thing. Keep thy Servant from presumptuous Sins, O Lord. Give me Understanding, and I shall keep thy Law. Lord increase our Faith.* Do not these Expressions sufficiently shew, that all the

1 Cor. iii. 5.
5, 6, 7, 9.

Ps. xxxviii.
21, &c.
cxli. 3, 4,
&c. xix.
13, &c.

Efficacy

Efficacy of external Means, that are appointed to sanctify us, depend absolutely upon the Assistance and Benediction of God?

IN the *Third Place*, the Prayers and Supplications which the Apostles so frequently make, and with so much fervour, for the Believers to whom they write, invincibly prove the same Thing. These Holy Men having given the most pathetick and touching Exhortations, having us'd the most prevalent and efficacious Motives to carry Christians to Sanctity, do often interrupt their Discourse, and conclude their Epistles with

these remarkable Words; *We pray always to*
 2 Thes. i. *God for ye, that our God would count ye worthy*
 11. & ii. 17. *of this Calling, and fulfil all the good Pleasure of*
his Goodness, and the Work of Faith with Power, that he
 Heb. xiii. *would comfort your Hearts, and stablish you in*
 21. *every good Word and Work; working in you that*
which is well pleasing in his Sight.

THE Apostles return Thanks to God continually for the Faith, the Patience, and the Charity that the Christians made appear in the Conduct of their Life. But why these Prayers so ardent; why these Thanksgivings so often reiterated, if Man be indebted to nothing but himself, to his own Reflections, and the good Use of his Liberty? If these external Means are sufficient to confirm him in Goodness, to perfect his Sanctity, and to lead him to Salvation?

I add, That the Sense of our Weakness, the Consideration of our Spiritual Enemies, and our own Experience, may convince us of the Truth that St. Paul teaches us to Day. I say the Sense of our Weakness: We are naturally dispos'd to Evil: We love the World, and the Things of the World. And altho' the Grace of God has put us in a Condition to act well, our Faith is very defective still, our Charity imperfect; our Affections are so much bent upon this Earth; the Duties of Piety seem to us to be so difficult and uneasy of Practice; the Promises of Christianity make so little
 Impression

mpression on our Souls, that if God does not take us by the Hand continually, our Fall and Perdition are inevitable. Besides which, we have a great Number of potent, cunning and treacherous Enemies, that lay snares for us every where; Snares, the more to be fear'd, because they are invisible, because it is almost impossible to perceive them. The Devil wheels round us incessantly: He attacks us in a thousand different Places, especially in those that are weak and ill-guarded; and he never sleeps, is never idle. From another Side, the World daily lays before us an infinite Number of bad Examples to inflame our Lusts: One while it is for drawing us by presenting its invenom'd Delights, its delusive Allurements and false Joys; another while it endeavours to affright us by its Persecutions and Violences. *Lastly*, our Flesh, our wretched Flesh incessantly Wars against our Souls: It is extremely averse to Suffering; it loves Pleasure even to Excess; and almost always sollicitates to Evil. And can we resist so many and violent Temptations, if God does not endue us with Courage and Strength, and cover us with the Buckler of his Protection? Accordingly *Jesus Christ* orders us to say to God every Day, *Lead us not into Temptation; but deliver us from Evil.*

Lastly, OUR own Experience ought to give us the finishing Conviction of this Truth. Is it not certain, that when you have pray'd to God; when you have supplicated him with Humility, with Fervour and with Tears, for the Assistance of his holy Spirit, you have found your selves fill'd with Strength; elevated above the Things of the World; and in a Condition to repel, to quench the fiery Darts of the evil One? On the contrary, Have ye not known, that when you have neglected the holy Exercise of Prayer, the Truths of Religion make but little Impression on your Hearts, Piety languishes, Charity cools, Patience tires; you are destitute of all Strength, and the least Temptation is enough to make you fall into Sin? *St. Paul*
was

was well vers'd in all these Considerations, when he said to the Believers of *Ephesus*, *I commend you to God, and to the Word of his Grace.*

BUT whereas all our Prayers would be useless, if we had to do with a weak and impotent God, like the false Gods of the *Pagans*; the Apostle shews in the Sequel, that our God is most capable of affording us the supernatural Assistance of which we stand in continual Need; *Which is able*, says he, *to build ye up, and to give ye an Inheritance among all them which are sanctify'd.*

IT appears that St. Paul was for Comforting the Faithful, who were extreemly afflicted at his Departure from them, and especially because he had said to them, they should see his Face no more, and that they should be expos'd to very great Temptations by Seducers and Persecutors of the Truth.

THIS Apostle had taken so much Care of their Souls, during his Abode at *Ephesus*, and the neighbouring Places; he had instructed them with so much Accuracy; he had exhorted them with so much Vehemence and paternal Affection; he had warn'd, comforted and encourag'd them, both in Publick and Private, with so great Tenderness, that the Thought of his removing so far from them made them tremble; they fear'd least their Church should fall into Looseness of Manners and Discipline, and perhaps into Apostacy, by the Absence of its Conductor, so excellent an Apostle. For this Reason St. Paul comforts and confirms them, by shewing, that if God vouchsaf'd to continue to them the Care of his Fatherly Providence, they would have nothing to fear; *God*, says he, *is able to build ye up, and to give ye an Inheritance among all them which are sanctify'd.*

GOD is able to build ye up. Observe that the Church is often compar'd in Scripture to a *House*, and a *Building*; that Believers are call'd *Living Stones*. Hence it is said, that the Apostles and Ministers labour'd for their *Edification*; and hence they are call'd Architects and Builders.

Builders. *As a wise Master-Builder I have laid the Foundation, and another buildeth thereon. We are built upon the Foundation, that is, upon the Doctrine of the Prophets and Apostles.* 'Tis after the same Figure that St. Paul says here to the Believers of *Ephesus*, *God is able to build ye up.* My Cares, this Great Apostle would say, my Instructions, my frequent Exhortations, accompany'd with my Tears, my Counsels and Precedents, have, by the Grace of God, produc'd in you Faith, Repentance, Charity, the Study of Sanctification, and the Desire of a blessed Immortality. You are edify'd, the Work of your Salvation is begun; but many Things are yet wanting to this Spiritual Edification: This Great Work is not done in a Moment. A Year, two Years, three Years are not sufficient to compleat it. This mystical Building must rise gradually, and increase all the Days of our Life, 'till it comes to Perfection. But God, *who has begun this Good Work in you by his Grace*, having effectually call'd you into Communion with his Son, and given you to believe in him, the same *God is able to build you up*: That is to say, to cure you absolutely of your remaining Infirmities; to give you all the Vertues that you want, and in the Degree that you ought to have them; to improve your Knowledge; to confirm your Faith, your Charity, and your Hope, *even to the Day of Jesus Christ.*

GOD is able, not only to send you zealous, prudent, charitable, vigilant Ministers, accomplish'd, faithful Workmen, to labour to your Edification, by the Purity of their Doctrine, and the Sanctity of their Life: But more than that, he can by his Providence defeat all your Spiritual Enemies, that oppose the Advancement and Progress of this Building; he can intercept their Temptations; can suppress the Violence of those Storms of Persecution, that the Devil or the World raise up to subvert ye: And if he does expose ye to those several Trials, can fill ye with internal Strength and Resolution; and inspire ye with so great a Contempt of the World, and so fervent a Love for Heaven, that ye will be unmovable in the midst of the most terrible Temptations; and what's more, the very Things that the Devil has invented for your Destruction will, by a Wonder of Providence, contribute to your Advantage and Salvation. Those Persecutions and Heresies, whose natural Effect it is to destroy Souls, will do nothing, but serve to establish ye powerfully in the Knowledge

Rom. viii. 17. I *will* ledge and Love of Truth and Piety; For all Things
 27. *work* together for Good to them that love God, to
 them who are the Called according to his Purpose.
 God is able to build ye up, and to give ye an Inheritance among
 all them which are sanctify'd.

THIS is the Great End that God is pleas'd to intend in the Preaching of his Gospel, in the Establishment of the Holy Ministry: 'Tis to give us his Inheritance; to render us eternally happy. By this *Inheritance* we are to understand the Glory, and glorious Immortality that God has reserv'd for his Servants in Paradice. I shall not here undertake to represent the Excellence of this heavenly Inheritance. Had we been transported into the *Jerusalem that is above*, like St. John; had we been taken up into the third Heaven, with St. Paul; we must be oblig'd to say, that we heard unspeakable Words, which it is not possible for a Man to utter. Let us be content to know then, that this celestial Inheritance hath three Qualities that distinguish and exalt it far above all the Inheritances of the World.

First, IT comprehends an absolute Deliverance from all Evils, and the Enjoyment of all the good Things that can make the Happiness of our Nature. It is an everlasting unalterable Rest, that nothing can disturb: A perfect Joy, which never shall be interrupted by Afflictions, by Diseases, by Quarrels, by Law-Suits, by Losses. *In the*

Rev. xxi. 4. *Holy City there shall be no more Sorrow, nor Grief, neither shall there be any Pain; for the former Things are pass'd away.*

Secondly, NO Pains are requir'd to cultivate and preserve this Inheritance. Who can recount the Cares, the Troubles, the Anxieties and Sollicitudes that attend the Enjoyment of the Goods of the World, of these Inheritances for which Men dispute with so much Fury, which they seek and pursue so hotly, which they look upon as their supreme Happiness? The greater these Inheritances are, the more Pain and Troubles they give the Possessors; insomuch that wise Kings have said, O Crown! if it were but known how heavy thou art, Men would not stoop to raise thee from the Earth. The Inheritance that we hope for in Heaven, is of quite another Nature, there will be nothing but Contentment and Pleasures in possessing it; no foreign Invasion; nor domestick Rebellion will arise to contest our Titles; no Partition will diminish our Happiness; we shall be all admitted

admitted to contemplate the Face of God, *disputat* who is the Fulness of Joy: *We shall be like him,* Psal. xvi. 11. *for we shall see him as he is.* All the Members of that blessed Society being endu'd with perfect Charity, the Felicity of one will be an inexhaustible Satisfaction to another. In short, that which enhances the Excellency of this Inheritance above all Things, is, that it will never be taken from us. O how great is this Advantage! Suppose we were actually possess'd of the greatest Inheritance of the World, we could not be assur'd that we shall enjoy it for any long Term, a thousand and a thousand Accidents may deprive us of it, and at last we must inevitably part with it by Death. This makes the Wealthy and the great Ones so unhappy in the midst of their Abundance and Delights. But those that possess the Inheritance of Heaven, shall never be troubled with the Fear of losing it. 'Tis an Inheritance incorruptible, and undeu'd laid up in Heaven. A Kingdom that cannot be shaken; Riches which the Injustice and Violence of Men cannot take from us. 'Tis that eternal Inheritance which God will and can give to those that he has adopted in Jesus Christ, by his great Mercy; and if Children then Heirs, Heirs of God, and joynt Heirs with Christ. God is able to build ye up, and to give ye an Inheritance with all them which are sanctify'd.

GOD can give you this Inheritance, because he is the Lord of it; 'tis he that hath promis'd and prepar'd it before the Foundation of the World, for them that love and fear him. And as Believers have a formidable Enemy that strenuously opposes their Introduction into this celestial Inheritance, I would say Death, St. Paul in this Place means principally, that God is powerful to keep what we have intrusted him with to the last Day, powerful to redeem our Bodies from the Grave, to breath the Breath of Life into our Dust and Ashes, and of them to raise a glorious and immortal Body, like that of *Jesus Christ*.

BUT what Assurance have we that God will exert his Omnipotence to work all these Wonders in our behalf? We are but Dust and Ashes, wretched Worms of the Earth, who have a thousand and a thousand Times offended his Divine Majesty, and render'd ourselves absolutely unworthy of the heavenly Inheritance. God can, 'tis true, do more than we can ask or think; but his Majesty, and perfect Holiness, do they permit us to believe that he will exercise his Power

to vanquish all the Obstacles that oppose our Happiness? Behold here then the solid Foundations of our Confidence, which are, *first of all*, the Word, the Promise of this Great God, which is firmer than the Pillars of Hea-

John iii. 16. *ven, and the Foundations of the Earth: God*
 Verse 28, 29. *so lov'd the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should*
 Mat. xvi. 18. *not Perish, but have everlasting Life. I give*
 John vi. 39. *my Life for my Sheep, says Jesus Christ, in the*
 10th Chapter of St. John, *my Father which gave them me is greater than all: And none is able to pluck them out of my Father's Hand. The Gates of Hell, or of the Grave, shall not prevail against my Church. This is my Father's Will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last Day.*

Secondly, THE prevalent Intercession of Jesus Christ gives us Reason to hope, that God, if we are not wanting to ourselves, will finish the good Work that he hath begun in us by his Grace, and will put the last Hand to the Work of our Salvation. *Jesus Christ*
 Heb. ix. 12. *appears in the Presence of God: By his own*
 24. & vii. 25. *Blood he enter'd into the holy Place to intercede for us. If God refus'd his Son nothing while he was on Earth, will he refuse him any thing now he is exalted far above all Heavens, and presents that precious Blood to him that he shed for our Salvation?*

BUT lastly, be it heedfully observ'd, that this heavenly Inheritance, of which St. Paul gives us Hope, by Virtue of the Promises of God, and the Intercession of our Saviour, cannot be possess'd by any but those that are *sanctify'd*: *God is able to build us up, and to give us an Inheritance among all those that are sanctify'd*; that is to say, those that God separates from this World, that he has really converted, who after their Conversion *walk*
 Rom. viii. 1. *not after the Flesh; but after the Spirit, who do*
 & xii. 2. *not conform to the present World, but are transform'd by the Renewal of their Minds*; who make it appear in all their Conduct, that they have receiv'd a new Heart, by the Grace of Regeneration, a new Spirit, new Affections, new Desires, new Views, new Hopes; that they propose to themselves a new End, that they have new Maxims, very different from those of the World. The Felicity of
 Heaven

Heaven is always call'd the *Inheritance of Saints*, and all the Scriptures constantly preach to us, that without Holiness no Man shall see God, and that *nothing that is unclean or defil'd shall enter into the heavenly Jerusalem*. Read the 5th Chapter of St. Matthew attentively, and you shall see that the Son of God doth not promise the Kingdom of Heaven, and eternal Life, to any but those that do the Will of his Father, to any but the Humble, the Meek, the Peace-Makers, the Merciful, the Pure in Heart, to them that mourn in a Sense of their Sins, that hunger and thirst after Righteousness, and patiently bear all manner of Indignities for the Interest of Truth. God cannot bely himself, and as he is perfectly Holy, and supremely Just, he cannot confer his Inheritance upon any but his obedient Children, who endeavour to imitate the Example of their heavenly Father, and study to be Holy as he is Holy. There is no Communion betwixt Light and Darkness, Righteousness and Iniquity, Christ and Belial.

I SHALL take Occasion here, with your kind Patience, to shew ye in a few Words, that the Assistance of the Spirit of God, that we have so often spoke to you of formerly, and which we have suppos'd in this Discourse, as an unquestionable Truth, that this supernatural Assistance perfectly accords with the Duty and Obligation of Man. When we preach the Necessity of Grace, the Efficacy of Grace, many are apt to imagine, that they have nothing to do, that all the Care of their Salvation rests upon God, that this all-wise and all-merciful Being will not fail to execute the Designs of his Love, after what way soever they pass their Lives; but this is an Absurdity, and a wretched Contradiction, they impose upon themselves, they willfully perish that reason after this Rate. St. Paul exhorts us in the 2d Epistle to the *Corinthians*, to be *Workers together with God, that we receive not the Grace of God in vain*; and in that to the *Philippians*, he tells us, *That we must work out our own Salvation with Fear and Trembling, for it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of his good Pleasure*. The same Scripture that teacheth us every where, that it is God who converts, who regenerates, who sanctifieth us, who creates a clean Heart in us, who is able to build us up,

Heb. xii. 14.

Rev. xxi. 27.

Chap. vi. 1.

Chap. xi. 12, 13.

1 Pet. i. 3.

Heb. x. 10.

Psal. l. 10.

Acts xx. 32.

and

Jude V. 24. *and to keep us from falling, and to render us un-*
 Col. i. 22. *blameable in his Sight, and to keep us by the*
 Psalm i. 5. *Power of God; the same Scripture says to us,*
 Hof. xiv. 2. *turn ye unto the Lord, make ye a new Heart,*
 Ezek. xviii. *and a new Spirit, cleanse your selves from all*
 31. & 1 Cor. *filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, perfecting Holiness*
 vii. 1. *in the Fear of God. Keep your selves in the*
 Jude 20, 21. *Love of God, looking for the Mercy of our Lord*
 Act. xx. 28, 31 *Jesus Christ unto eternal Life. Take heed there-*
 in his great Mercy has prevented us, it should be our Care
 to follow his Call without any Ballancing, and
 Acts ix. 6. *say to him with St. Paul, Lord, what wouldst*
 thou have me to do? When God makes us hear
 1 Sam. iii. 9. *his Voice, a true Believer says immediately,*
 speak Lord, for thy Servant hears. God lays
 happy Occasions of well-doing in our Way, a good Chri-
 stian embraces them with Zeal, and lets none of them
 escape. God often places good Examples before our Eyes,
 a Man that is conducted by the holy Spirit, does his Endeav-
 our to imitate them. God visits us with Affliction, it lies
 upon us to comply with the Design of God, who would
 wean us more and more from Earth, and in-
 spire us with ardent Desires for Heaven. Let
 Heb. iv. 1. *us fear least a Promise being left us of entering*
 1 Cor. x. 12. *into his Rest, any of us should seem to come*
short of it: Let him that stands take heed lest he fall. Last-
ly, for I should be too Prolix, if I should run thro' all the
Affistance that God affords to finish our Sanctification.
Lastly, God sollicitates us within to Vertue: He inspires good
Thoughts and pious Purposes into us; we ought to comply
with his secret Impulsions and good Influences without Re-
luctance. All those that resist the holy Spirit, that extin-
guish his Light, that grieve him by their ill Actions, have
no Part in the Promises of the Gospel: They renounce the
Protection of God, and the Hope of the heavenly Inheri-
tance. God is able then, to do what? To condemn, to
destroy, to consign them to Perdition. To him
 Mat. xiii. *that has, says Jesus Christ; that is, to him that*
 12. *improves by the first Favours that he has receiv'd,*
more shall be given; but from him that has not,
shall be taken away even that which he hath. St. Paul always
looks upon them as true Believers, that apply themselves
sincerely

sincerely to their Duty, and make their Salvation their principal Affair: To all such he makes these great Promises; *God is faithful, who will not suffer ye to be tempted beyond what ye are able. The Lord is faithful, who shall stablish ye, and keep ye from Evil. He shall support ye to the Day of the Lord Jesus Christ. God is able to build ye up, and to give ye an Inheritance among all them which are sanctify'd.*

2 Cor. x.

13, &c.

2 Thes. iii.

3, &c.

2 Tim. iv.

18.

Phil. i. 6.

Act. xx. 32

WHAT God then has so inseparably joyn'd together, let us not put asunder; the Grace of the Spirit, and the Duty of Man. Let us give Diligence to make our Calling and Election sure, by all Kinds of Good Works, that we may be able to apply the Promises of the Gospel justly to our selves. Let us be what God requires. *We desire that every one of you do shew the same Diligence, to the full Assurance of Hope to the End.* There is Care then to be taken to gain the full Assurance of Hope. Wherefore the Scripture says, *Giving all Diligence, add to your Faith Vertue, and to Vertue Knowledge, and to Knowledge Temperance, and to Temperance Patience, and to Patience Godliness, and to Godliness Brotherly Kindness, and to Brotherly Kindness Charity: For so an Entrance shall be ministred unto ye abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

2 Pet. i. 10.

Heb. vi. 11.

2 Pet. i. 5,

6, 7. 11.

AFTER all which, I conjure ye to remember, that without the continual Assistance of the Grace of God, you must miscarry. Implore, therefore, this divine Assistance without ceasing, *Ask, and it shall be given ye; seek, and ye shall find.* If you that are evil know how to give good Gifts to your Children, how much more will your Heavenly Father give the Spirit to them that ask him.

Luke xi.

9, 10, 13.

BUT we must ask this Spirit with Fervor, with Vehemence: And in this we fail almost all of us.

When we are in Poverty: When we are under any Pressure or Affliction: In a Word, when any Temporal Interest is in Jeopardy, we exclaim, we weep, we lament, we give our selves no Rest 'till we have obtain'd what we want. But as to our Spiritual Indigence; as to the Concern of Salvation, we are lukewarm, careless, insensible; we are soon repuls'd; we do not think of what we ask. And are we then to wonder, if God leaves us to our selves, and takes his holy Spirit from us.

LET

LET us then lay our Hand upon our Hearts, and seriously, that if God should with greatest Profusion give us all the Temporal Favours we can desire, we must be the most miserable of all Creatures if he does not take care of our Salvation, and exert his Power to build us up, and give us his Inheritance.

I exhort ye to think of this Inheritance more frequently, and with more Affection than hitherto you have done. Endeavour, above all, to fulfil the Conditions that God has impos'd upon you to obtain it. What do we not do to acquire some wretched Interests in this World; to procure Riches, which cannot be possess'd but a small Time? Where we expect an Inheritance, nay, a small Part of an Inheritance, what Complaisance, what Submission, what Respect do we not shew to the Commands of that Person that will give us such a Mark of his Affection? What Care do we not take to please: With what Caution do we not shun every Thing that may offend him? And shall we do nothing to secure an eternal an incorruptible Inheritance? Shall we do nothing to please God, who by his great Mercy promises us this Inheritance?

Lastly, REMEMBER that this Inheritance is the Portion of them which are Sanctify'd. *He that has this Hope, to see God and possess his Inheritance, purifies himself as God is pure.* Finally, my Brethren; dearly Beloved, *Whatsoever Things are true; whatsoever Things are honest; whatsoever Things are just; whatsoever Things are pure; whatsoever Things are lovely; whatsoever Things are of good Report: If there be any Vertue; if there be any Praise, think on these Things. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.* Avoid all Occasions of Sin. Apply your selves to the Reading and Meditation of the Word of God, which will perfectly teach you your Duty, and your Hope. *Continue in Prayer and Supplication; and watch in the same with Thanksgiving.* Col. iv. 2.

Reflect frequently upon the Manner and Conduct of your Life. Approach the Lord's Table with Humility and Devotion; and practise the other Exercises of Piety that the holy Spirit recommends to ye. Live in Loyalty, Obedience and Subjection to the King, that the good Providence of God has set over us: Live in Peace, in Concord, and brotherly Charity one with another. And you will at last hear these comfortable Words, *Come, ye blessed Children of my Father, receive the Kingdom prepared for you from the Beginning of the World.* Amen. FINIS.